

KALISPELL FIRE DEPARTMENT

SENATE FINANCE & CLAIMS

Randy Brodehl - Fire Chief
Daniel Diehl - Assistant Chief/Operations
DC Haas - Assistant Chief/Prevention



PO Box 1997
312 First Avenue East
Kalispell, Montana 59903
Phone: (406) 758-7760
FAX: (406) 758-7952
Bill No.

Exhibit No. 24
3-29-07
HB 820

3/28/2007

Members of the Senate Finance and Claims Committee

Re: Amendment to HB 806 to fund Regional Hazardous Materials Teams


I'm requesting your assistance and support to fund the six State of Montana Regional Hazardous Materials Teams by approving an amendment to HB 806, which will include \$290,000 annual funding for these regional teams. This will come before the Senate Finance and Claims Committee at 8:00 AM on Thursday, March 28. The funding decision package for these teams was not approved by the Corrections and Public Safety Joint Subcommittee when they reviewed the funding package of the State Department of Emergency Services (DES). The vote was a tie and split on party lines.

There are six regional hazardous materials teams that respond to hazmat releases and events in Montana. While these six teams are based in our larger cities, their response can be to anywhere in Montana, and often requires the resources of two or more teams when working with large or critical spills, working in conjunction with local fire departments. The team members, equipment, and training is highly specialized and designed to mitigate immediate threat to lives and property.

The team idea began 14 years ago, and a formal team response plan was implemented in 2004. This team response plan mirrors the response plans of most states. Through thousands of hours of hazmat technician training and the use of very specialized equipment, Montana's teams are now experts at what they do and are a tremendous asset to all Montanans. Each of the teams is made up of firefighters from Montana's six largest cities: Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls, Helena, Kalispell, and Missoula. The six communities that host the teams currently cannot support responses across the state without state funding support. Federal funding targets startup costs but does little to provide for training, response support, and maintenance. The federal government, the state, and the local communities have invested \$2,254,000, or about \$375,000 per team, in equipment, with each team having up to 20 hazmat technicians. Personnel costs have been borne by the local communities as part of their commitment to this joint venture.

Now, the decision package for continued regional response has not been approved and we are seeking assistance in reintroducing this funding for the state-wide response need. Using an absolute bare bones budget approach, the teams are requesting \$290,000, or about \$48,333 annually per team to recalibrate equipment, to replace failed hazmat suits, and to fund joint training between the teams so they are able to work together efficiently on larger incidents. I am requesting your assistance in supporting an amendment in the Senate Finance and Claims Committee so the issue is approved as part of the budget submittal transmitted to the full Senate for vote.

I am available provide any additional information or assistance.


Randy Brodehl, Fire Chief
(406)758-7762 Office
(406)751-1612